

## Students Strive to "Build a Better Mac"

"How can we make Macalester better?" That's the central question a new student-led initiative is addressing. Last fall more than 100 students came together to identify ways to strengthen the college and make it an even better place to live and learn. True to the spirit of their concern, they're calling the effort 'Build a Better Mac.'

"Our focus is on creating more opportunities for students to interact across political and other types of difference," explained Owen Truesdell '11, president, Macalester College Student Government who, along with Yeukai Mudzi '12, co-facilitates the grassroots effort.

The group has identified four areas of focus: bridging the divide between international and domestic students, creating opportunities for civil dialogue across political differences, bringing athletes and non-athletes together, and fostering interaction across academic divisions of the college.

Laurie Hamre, vice president, Student Affairs applauds the effort. "A central part of our mission is to help young people develop as citizens and leaders. Build a Better Mac is empowering students to not only articulate the type of environment in which they want to live and learn, but also to assume the leadership to make the change they'd like to see."

This semester Build a Better Mac will work with other student organizations to plan events that facilitate civil discussion of political differences.

"We want to encourage Mac students to develop skills necessary to engage meaningfully in political conversations with other people, regardless of their political ideology or point of view," Truesdell said.

The first event, co-sponsored with Mac GOP and Mac Dems, features politically conservative thinker and analyst Reihan Salam, who writes for the *National Review Online* and *The Daily Beast*. Salam will speak on the value of political diversity at colleges and the role of conservatism nationally. His talk will be followed by round-table discussions moderated by faculty members, staff and student volunteers.

"We think it's important to bring a diversity of speakers to campus, to share a variety of views with students," said Truesdell. "If we are to be global citizens we need to be able to have a give and take—not just a give, but a dialogue."

While Build a Better Mac is still new, Truesdell is optimistic about the future. "We're laying a solid foundation this year and hope that Build a Better Mac will continue to address a range of issues that are important to students."

More Information:

Visit *Build a Better Mac* on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Build-a-Better-Mac/154453264602917>)

Reihan Salam event information (<http://events.macalester.edu/event.cfm?id=13090>)

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